

THE SURVIVAL OF THE PAGAN GODS

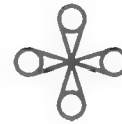
*The Mythological Tradition and Its Place
in Renaissance Humanism and Art*

By

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TO
THE MEMORY
OF
MY MOTHER

THE SURVIVAL OF THE PAGAN GODS

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PART ONE: THE CONCEPTS

I

The Historical Tradition

ON THE APPEARANCE, early in the third century B.C., of the romance by Euhemerus which was destined to exert so lasting an influence, the intellectual climate of the Greco-Roman world was in a state exceptionally favorable to its reception.¹ Philosophical speculation and recent history alike had prepared the way for an understanding of the process by which, in times long past, the gods had been recruited from the ranks of mortal men.

Philosophy, from Aristotle onward, had recognized a divine element within the human soul, the nature of which was thus more specifically defined by the Stoics: "Deus est mortali juvare mortalem et haec ad aeternam gloriam via" ("For mortal to aid mortal—this is God, and this is the road to eternal glory").² A noble formula this, which Cicero develops in his *Tusculan Disputations*: those men have within them a supernatural element and are destined for eternal life who regard themselves as born into the world to help and guard and preserve their fellow men. Hercules passed away to join the gods: he would never so have passed unless in the course of his mortal life he had built for himself the road he traveled.³

At the same time, the superhuman career of Alexander, and above all his expedition to India—where he became the object of adoration similar to that which, according to the myth, had once greeted Dionysus there—had suddenly thrown light upon the origin of the gods. For the generations who subsequently witnessed the official deification of the Seleucids and Ptolemies

¹ See P. Decharme, *La Critique des traditions religieuses chez les grecs* (Paris, 1904), pp. 372–373, and chap. xii: "L'Evhémérisme et l'interprétation historique."

² Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, II, 7, 18; in all probability, a translation from Posidonius.

³ Cicero, *Tusc.*, I, 32; see also *ibid.*, 25–26, and *De natura deorum*, II, 24.

there could be no further doubt: the traditional deities were merely earthly rulers, whom the gratitude or adulation of their subjects had raised to a place in heaven.⁴

The appearance of Euhemerus' work was well timed. Its success was immediate. It was one of the first books to be translated from Greek into Latin; Ennius' version, as is well known, gave it general currency in Rome, where Picus, Janus, and Saturn promptly became princes who had once ruled over Latium. The euhemeristic thesis set at rest for a time the disquiet that the traditional mythology had always inspired in the minds of educated men, who, though unable to accord it their literal belief, had nevertheless hesitated to reject as a mass of outright falsehood the time-honored tales for which Homer himself stood guarantor. A few voices, however, denounced euhemerism as impious and absurd.⁵ Above all, its prosaic character made it disappointing to the ever increasing number of persons who had succumbed to the appeal of the supernatural and craved a more emotional type of religious belief.⁶

But euhemerism was to enjoy an extraordinary revival at the beginning of the Christian era. First the apologists, then the Fathers, seized eagerly upon this weapon which paganism itself had offered them, and made use of it against its polytheistic source.

It was only too easy for Clement of Alexandria, who quoted Euhemerus in his *Cohortatio ad gentes* (PG, viii, 152) to declare to the infidel: "Those to whom you bow were once men like yourselves."⁷ Lactantius, again, to whom we owe the preservation of a few fragments of Euhemerus and of Ennius' translation, proclaims triumphantly in his *Divinae institutiones* that the gods, one and all, are nothing but mortal beings who have been raised from

⁴ Instances of deification of high Egyptian officials at an earlier date are given by Charles Picard in his article, "L'Inhumation 'ad sanctos' dans l'antiquité," *Revue archéologique* t (1947), pp. 82-85.

⁵ Cicero, *De natur. deor.*, i, 42. But in a passage in *Tusc.* (i, 12-13), Cicero seems implicitly to admit that all the gods are men who have been raised from earth to heaven: "Totum prope caelum . . . nonne genere humano completum est?" ("Is not almost the

whole of heaven . . . filled with gods of mortal origin?")—LCL. Cf. Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, xiii.

⁶ G. Boissier, *La Religion romaine, d'Auguste aux Antonins*, ii, vii, 2. On the fortunes of euhemerism in antiquity, see Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion* (ed. 1935), pp. 152-160, and A. B. Drachmann, *Atheism in Pagan Antiquity* (Copenhagen, 1922).

⁷ *Οἱ προσχυνούμενοι παρ' ἡμῖν ἄνθρωποι γένε-
μενολ πότε.*

earth to heaven through the idolatry of their contemporaries (*PL*, vi, 190 ff.). Also euhemeristic in inspiration are the *De idololorum vanitate* of St. Cyprian, the *De idololatria* of Tertullian, the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, the *Adversus nationes* of Arnobius, the *Instructiones adversus gentium deos* of Commodian, and the *De erroribus profanarum religionum* of Firmicus Maternus. St. Augustine, in the *De consensu Evangelistarum* (*PL*, xxxiv, 1056) and the *De civitate Dei* (vii, 18, and viii, 26), was to subscribe in his turn to this theory, which seemed bound to prove fatal to the adversary.

Thus euhemerism became a favorite weapon of the Christian polemicists, a weapon which they made use of at every turn.⁸ In fact, as Cumont has shown,⁹ their tactics were not always wholly legitimate, being aimed for the most part at an idolatry long since extinct, and at gods whose existence had been reduced to a mere literary convention. What matters to us, however, is that the Christian apologists bequeathed to the Middle Ages a tradition of euhemerism, with further reinforcement from the commentators of Virgil—especially from Servius, whose errors the Middle Ages accepted as articles of faith.¹⁰

*

THE EUHEMERISTIC tradition remains a living influence throughout the Middle Ages, although it undergoes a total change of character. The human origin of the gods ceases to be a weapon to be used against them, a source of rejection and contempt. Instead, it gives them a certain protection, even granting them a right to survive. In the end it forms, as it were, their patent of nobility.

First of all, euhemerism at a rather early date loses its polemic venom, to become instead an auxiliary to historical research. Certain men have become gods; at what period, then, were they alive upon earth? Is it possible to assign them a definite place in human history?

⁸ And sometimes for contradictory ends. In the towns, Christian preaching encountered a predominantly symbolic or allegorical explanation of the myths, which had to be refuted in a summary and brutal way. In country districts, the chief obstacle to Christianity was offered by the tenacious survival of anthropomorphic cults; here the problem became one of still

further humanizing the divinities of springs, trees, and mountains, in order to rob them of their prestige. See P. Alphandéry, "L'Evhémérisme et les débuts de l'histoire des religions au Moyen-Âge," *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, cix (1934), pp. 1-27, esp. p. 13.

⁹ *Les Religions orientales dans le paganisme romain* (4th ed., 1929), pp. 186-187.

¹⁰ See Alphandéry, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

This tendency is already apparent in Eusebius. He explains in his *Ecclesiastical History* that the Babylonian god Baal was in reality the first king of the Assyrians, and that he lived *at the time of* the war between the Giants and the Titans (*PG*, xix, 132–133). The coincidence in time is still only approximate, and it is clear, furthermore, that Eusebius' main concern is to show the religion of the chosen people as antedating pagan mythology. It was he, however, who bequeathed to the Middle Ages, through St. Jerome, the prototype of those crude historical synchronizations which grouped all the events and characters of human history, from the birth of Abraham down to the Christian era (including the gods themselves), into a few essential periods.

After Eusebius, Paulus Orosius does much the same thing. Although he is writing "adversus paganos" and under the inspiration of Augustine, his book is above all an attempt to unravel the past, even the past of fable and legend; this is all the more significant since it remained a manual of the highest authority throughout the Middle Ages and even into the Renaissance, going through twenty editions in the sixteenth century.

But it is in the seventh century, in the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville, that we find the most interesting application of euhemerism to history, in the chapter "De diis gentium" (Bk. viii, chap. xi; *PL*, lxxxii, 314). "Quos pagani deos asserunt, homines olim fuisse produntur."¹¹ Not only does Isidore, following Lactantius, accept this principle—he seeks to demonstrate it. He attempts to "place" these gods "secundum ordinem temporum" in world history divided into six great periods: from the Creation to the Flood; from the Flood to Abraham; from Abraham to David; from David to the Babylonian Captivity; from the Captivity to the Birth of Christ; from the Nativity onward. This scheme may appear rudimentary, but Isidore's erudition enabled him to enrich it with a wealth of marvelous detail concerning primitive Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome. Drawing by way of Lactantius on Varro, and even on Ennius, he reconstructed mythological groups and dynasties: Belus, king of Assyria, of whom Eusebius had spoken, was the father of Ninus, etc. Above all, he singled out in these primitive ages the heroic figures who, from Prometheus on, had been leaders and pioneers in civilization—slay-

¹¹ "Those whom the pagans claim to be gods were once mere men."

ers of monsters, founders of cities, discoverers of arts and skills. The result was to restore dignity and independence to the personages of Fable: as benefactors of humanity they had every right to be held in grateful remembrance. And on the other hand, there was no reason for subordinating them to figures from Holy Writ—to the patriarchs, judges, and prophets; they could be ranked together, even if they were not of the same lineage. By gaining a foothold in history, the gods had acquired new prestige.

This is clearly to be seen, for example, in Ado of Vienne, whose *Chronicle of the Six Ages of the World* stems from the *Etymologiae*. After speaking of Moses and the Exodus, he refers to contemporary events in the pagan world: "In those days, it is said, lived Prometheus, who is believed to have fashioned men out of clay; his brother, Atlas, living at the same time, was regarded as a great astrologer; the grandson of Atlas, Mercury, was a sage skilled in several arts. For this reason, the vain error of his contemporaries placed him after his death among the gods" (*PL*, cxxiii, 35).

Aside from the expression "vain error," this passage has lost all accent of contempt or hostility; instead, we observe a concern for fixing dates, for determining pedigrees and genealogies, with a view to making room for the heroes of Fable in the annals of humanity. Does this not constitute a recognition of the virtues which, in times long past, had earned them their place in heaven? Parallel to the story of Scripture, this account of profane history is no longer subordinate to it; the first neither influences nor overshadows the second. Mercury has his own kind of greatness, as Moses has his. We have come a long way from Eusebius, who derived all pagan divinities from the Moses type, and for whom profane wisdom was merely a reflection of the wisdom of Israel.

*

ADO OF VIENNE is only one among the innumerable continuators of Isidore; in fact, there is hardly a chronicler or compiler of universal history writing after the great encyclopedist who fails to include humanized gods in his enumeration of ancient kings and heroes. We shall not present the endless list of these authors here, especially as it has already been compiled by others.¹² Let us mention only the most important of them all Peter Comestor.

¹² See Alphandéry, *op. cit.*, and J. D. Cooke, "Classical Paganism," *Speculum*, II (1927), pp. 396–410.
"Euhemerism, A Mediaeval Interpretation of"

Around the year 1160, this Peter Comestor, dean of the church of Notre Dame at Troyes and later chancellor of Notre Dame at Paris, wrote under the title of *Historia scholastica* a history of God's people which penetrated to all parts of Europe in the translation by Guyart des Moulins (*Bible historiale* [1294]). In this work, which enjoyed tremendous authority,¹³ we recognize in fixed and, as it were, codified form, the euhemeristic orientation that we first saw beginning to take shape in the writings of Isidore.

As an appendix to his sacred history, Peter condenses the mythological material furnished him by Isidore and his predecessors, Orosius and St. Jerome, into a series of short chapters, or *incidentiae*. The parallelism between the two narratives, sacred and profane, is presented with curious precision: clearly, the figures from the world of Fable, though of different lineage, have now achieved a basis of strict equality with the Biblical characters. In both groups, Peter recognizes men of superior stature, geniuses endowed with profound and mysterious wisdom. Zoroaster invented magic and inscribed the Seven Arts on four columns (Gen. xxxix); Isis taught the Egyptians the letters of the alphabet and showed them how to write (Lxx); Minerva taught several arts, in particular that of weaving (Lxxvi); Prometheus, renowned for his wisdom, is reputed to have created men, either because he instructed the ignorant or perhaps because he fabricated automata. All these mighty spirits are worthy of veneration, exactly as are the patriarchs, and for the same reasons: they have been the guides and teachers of humanity, and together stand as the common ancestors of civilization.

This tendency of the Middle Ages to establish parallels between pagan wisdom and the wisdom of the Bible has long been recognized. It came clearly to light when study was first undertaken of the representations on cathedral portals¹⁴ associating Sibyls and Prophets, and of the legend of Virgil, whom the medieval imagination had transformed into a kind of sorcerer or mage.¹⁵ The Sibyls and the author of the Fourth Eclogue, it is true, had had intuitive

¹³ Yearly editions from 1473 to 1526; another edition, Venice, 1729. Huet quotes the work; Richard Simon refers to its lasting success.

¹⁴ See Emile Mâle, *L'Art religieux du XIII^e siècle en France* (6th ed., Paris, 1925), p. 339; *L'Art religieux de la fin du moyen âge*, pp. 268-296.

¹⁵ See Comparetti, *Virgilio nel medioevo* (new ed., Florence, 1937); J. Webster Spargo, *Virgil the Necromancer* (1934), chap. ii: "The Talismanic Arts."

foreknowledge of Christian verity, and had foretold its coming. Applied to the divinities of paganism, this tendency has, as will be seen, surprising results. Not only does it "justify" the false gods by recognizing in them certain real virtues, but it even goes so far as to re-endow them with at least a part of their supernatural character.¹⁶

If we now look back at the diatribes of Arnobius and Commodian, we shall see that euhemerism was a weapon which cut both ways. What, in the intention of the apologists, it should have demolished, it actually confirmed and exalted. "If deification," Tertullian had argued, "is a reward of merit, why was Socrates not deified for his wisdom, Aristides for his justice, Demosthenes for his eloquence?" Tertullian, in his irony, spoke better than he knew: the Middle Ages were disposed to remedy this injustice. In his superstitious zeal, mediæval man was ready to venerate sages whom antiquity itself had not placed among the immortals.

*

As we have said, the pagan gods were no longer thought to have purloined the magic gifts they were believed to possess from the treasury of Christian wisdom. But might they not have inherited their power from the demons, with whom the first apologists often sought to identify them?¹⁷

In the tradition with which we are concerned, it might be possible to find traces of this idea—distant recollections, but nothing more. Neither Isidore nor his followers attribute a demonic character to the genius, the supernatural gifts which have brought about the elevation of great men to the rank of gods.¹⁸ True, Apollo and Mercury have taken on the look of magicians, but this is no reason for regarding them with suspicion. They are good magicians, benevolent sorcerers. Humanity has much to thank them for.

That this was indeed the common attitude in the Middle Ages can be clearly seen in the works of popularization. Not only did the *Historia* of Peter

¹⁶ Peter Comestor may have had in his hands the *De incredibilibus* (Περὶ ἀπίστων) of Pseudo-Philostratus, which he cites (Judges, xx), and which would still further have strengthened his appreciation of the element of prodigy in pagan science.

¹⁷ See, for example, Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, PL, i, i, 641 and 643: Venus, Bacchus, Castor,

Pollux, etc., are "daemonia." Cf. St. Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmos*, Psalm 96 (PL, xxxvi, 1231-32), verse 5: "Omnes dii gentium daemonia" ("All the gods of the heathen are demons").

¹⁸ We shall study the tradition of the demonic in the next chapter in connection with astrology.

Comestor, which had come into general use as a textbook (a veritable "memento of the history of religions," as Alphandéry calls it), mold generations of readers in orthodox euhemerist views and furnish Vincent of Beauvais with all the essentials of what he wrote of the gods in the *Speculum historiale*; it also directly or indirectly inspired the compilations in vulgar tongues which brought science within reach of the layman.¹⁹ These books go even farther in the same direction. They proclaim the gratitude of humanity toward the men of genius whom antiquity had made into gods. The *Book of the Treasure* of Brunetto Latini places Hercules side by side with Moses, Solon, Lycurgus, Numa Pompilius, and the Greek king Phoroneus as among the first legislators, who by instituting codes of law saved the nations of men from the ruin to which their own original frailty and impurity would have condemned them.²⁰

Our medieval compilers feel themselves indebted to all these great men; they also feel themselves their heirs. For civilization is a treasure which has been handed down through the centuries; and as no further distinction is made between the sacred and profane precursors of Christianity who first forged that treasure, it is at last possible for medieval man unreservedly and even with pride to claim the heritage of antiquity. In the twelfth century, cultivated men were already aware of the Greco-Roman origins of their culture,²¹ and Chrestien de Troyes affirms the idea that France has garnered the patrimony of antique culture and virtue:

Grece ot de chevalerie

Le premier los et de clergie

¹⁹ See P. Meyer, "Les Premières Compilations françaises d'histoire ancienne," *Romania*, xiv (1885), pp. 38-81. Cf., at a much later date, early in the fourteenth century, the "historical" interpretations found in a poem of essentially "edifying" character, the *Ovide moralisé* (I, vv. 859 ff. and vv. 1101 f.)

*Jupiter fut, selon l'estoire
Rois de Crete, et jesoit accroire
Par l'art de son enchanement
Qu'il ert Deus . . .*

("Jupiter, according to history, was King of Crete, and by his magic art caused it to be believed that he was God.")

*Or vous dirai coment la fable
Peut estre à l'estoire acordable" . . .*

("Now I will tell you how fable can be made to agree with history.")

²⁰ See C. V. Langlois, *La Connaissance de la nature et du monde au moyen âge*, in *idem*, *La Vie en France au moyen âge*, III (Paris, 1927), pp. 341-342.

²¹ See E. Faral, *Recherches sur les sources latines des contes et romans courtois* (Paris, 1913), pp. 398 ff. The idea of the continuity between the ancient and contemporary worlds is thus seen not to have been peculiar to the Renaissance humanists. Cf., on this point, the controversy between Bremond and Hauser, in Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France*, vol. I: *L'Humanisme dévot*, chap. I, section II, esp. pp. 4-6.

Puis vint chevalerie a Rome

Et de la clergie la some

*Qui ore est en France venue . . .*²²

This idea reappears insistently in the popular encyclopedias of the thirteenth century.²³ And among the "chevaliers" and "clercs," whose glorious tradition the French are so proud of continuing, appear valiant captains at times called Alexander or Caesar, but at others Hercules or Jason, and great inventors, now known as Ptolemy or Aristotle, and again as Mercury or Prometheus.

*

As we have just seen, the French of the thirteenth century believed that the heritage of antiquity was theirs by special right; other peoples had long advanced the same claim. In the fifth century, the Spaniard, Paulus Orosius, boasts of being a genuine Roman; later, a Gregory of Tours, an Isidore of Seville, were to see themselves as belonging to peoples especially privileged in comparison with "barbarian" stock. But this pride of descent, which is hardly ever absent from the learned writings of the Middle Ages, brings with it one curious consequence: in order to justify his pretensions, the scholar turns to the fabled past of antiquity for supporting witnesses, for ancestors and begetters. Thus originate those "ethnogenic" fables (as Gaston Paris called them) which name a hero or demigod as ancestor of a whole people.

One such fable, which proved to be a particularly hardy one, is famed above all—that according to which the Franks were descendants of the Trojan Francus, as the Romans were of the Trojan Aeneas. This legend was an invention of Merovingian scholars,²⁴ but it should not be dismissed as a mere fantasy of learned minds. It was taken seriously as genealogy, and became a "veritable form of ethnic consciousness."²⁵ Its plausibility was enhanced by the apocryphal journals of the siege of Troy by the "Cretan" Dictys and the "Phrygian" Dares, which had been popular ever since the Greek decadence:

²² *Cligès* (ed. W. Foerster), vv. 32 ff. ("Greece had once the leadership in chivalry and learning; then chivalry passed to Rome together with the sum of learning, which now has come to France.")

²³ For example, in *L'Image du monde*. See Langlois, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

²⁴ The earliest evidence of this legend is met with in the *Chronique de Frédégaire*; the *Liber historiae Francorum* adds new elements.

²⁵ Alphandéry, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

with their appearance of exact documentation they, as it were, secularized the marvels of antiquity and gave them the color of true history. "These *procès-verbaux* of gods and heroes presented them in such a light that they seemed more convincingly historical than Charlemagne, Roland, or Oliver. . . ." But even when thus humanized, and brought near enough to look like probable ancestors, these figures lost none of their mythical prestige; mortals who claimed relationship with them on historical grounds could boast of their supernatural origin. Did not the Trojan Aeneas, "de' Romani il gentil seme,"²⁶ leave a quasi-divine imprint upon the whole race of his descendants?

The exceptional popularity enjoyed by the legend of Troy in the Middle Ages was therefore not due exclusively to the interest of the romantic narrative in itself; the *Roman de Troie* of Benoît de Sainte-Maure contained a "sort of mythical substratum" where the medieval listener or reader could more or less consciously detect "something of his moral genealogy."

This, then, is one of the effects of euhemerism in the Middle Ages: mythological figures are no longer presented as common benefactors of humanity. They are the patrons of this or that people,²⁷ the parent stem from which the race has issued and from which it derives its glory.

*

IN THIS regard no break is discernible between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; the same considerations which have protected the gods continue to

²⁶ Dante, *Inferno*, xxvi, 60 ("of Romans the noble seed").—In addition to the Romulus story and the legend of Trojan descent, Rome has other and purely mythological origins. In his *Dittamondo*, Fazio degli Uberti relates that Janus was the first king of the Latins; then came Saturn and his sons, "Iddii nomati in terra," who civilized Italy. Cf. *supra*, p. 12.—See A. Graf, *Roma nella memoria e nelle immaginazioni del medioevo* (1882).

²⁷ Or even of this or that city: medieval scholars did their utmost to prove that their cities had been named for a hero or demigod. According to Flodoard (*PL*, cxxxv, 28), Rheims was founded by Remus; Siebert de Gembloux (*PL*, cix, 717) held that Metz was founded by one Metius, "who lived under Julius Caesar," and whose name he had read upon an ancient stone. Other similar examples

could be given.

Cf. also the legend of Hercules as protector and symbol of Florence; from the end of the thirteenth century he appears on the seals of the Signoria with the legend: "Herculea clava domat Florentia prava" (see Müntz, *Les Précurseurs de la Renaissance* [1882], p. 48). Tradition would have it, on the other hand, that the patron of pagan Florence was Mars, a supposed statue of whom was to be seen in the Middle Ages near the Ponte Vecchio (Dante, *Inferno*, xiii, 143-150). It was believed by some that the fortunes of the city were intimately bound up with this statue (R. Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze*, II, pp. 1156 ff.).—The Florence statue is actually of the group of Patroclus and Menelaus from which the Roman Pasquino was derived.

assure their survival. They are still given a place in history: not only do the early chronicles, printed and many times reissued, retain their full authority, but the fifteenth-century chroniclers follow their lead, and never fail to devote one or more chapters to the pagan divinities. This is true of the *Rudimentum noviciorum* (1475), the *Fasciculus temporum* (1475), and the *Mer des hystoires* (1488); also of Annius of Viterbo, the pseudo commentator on Berosus,²⁸ and Jacopo da Bergamo.

The last-named, for example, in his *Supplementum chronicarum*,²⁹ studies the origin and the pedigrees of the gods (Bk. III, f. 12). Jupiter is a king who has been worshipped under that name because of his resemblance to the planet Jupiter; other kings have borne the same name, notably the king of Candia, a son of Saturn—who is, of course, historical, as are Ops, Caelus, Uranus, Vesta, etc.³⁰ Then Semiramis is dealt with, and Lot and Isaac; but a little later (f. 15, r and v) the gods reappear—Cybele, Pallas, the Sun, Diana. Next we pass to Jacob, Leah, and Rachel, and to the monarchs of Assyria; then come Ceres and Isis (f. 16, 17 r); and after a paragraph devoted to Joseph, we meet Apollo, Bacchus, Vulcan, Apis, and Osiris. As in Peter Comestor, mythology alternates with sacred history. It is of interest to note also that this compilation by Jacopo da Bergamo includes additional chapters on the Sibyls and on the Trojan war, a geographical section containing a list of all cities famed since the beginning of time, and, last of all, a contemporary history.

The sixteenth century is in this respect a repetition of the fifteenth: the *Promptuaire* of Guillaume Rouille (*Promptuarium iconum insigniorum a saeculo hominum* [1553]), the *World Chronicle* of Antoine du Verdier (*Prosopographie ou Description des personnes, patriarches, prophètes, dieux des gentils, roys, consuls, princes, grands capitaines, ducs, philosophes, orateurs, poètes, juriconsultes et inventeurs de plusieurs arts, avec les effigies d'aucuns d'iceux* . . . [1573]), and the compilation by Eilhardus Lubinus (*Fax poetica sive genealogia et res gestae deorum gentilium, virorum, regum*,

²⁸ *Commentaria fratris Joannis Anni . . . super opera diversorum auctorum de antiquitibus loquentium confecta* . . . (Rome, 1498).

²⁹ Venice (1483); our references are to the edition of 1485.

³⁰ Similarly, Jacopo da Bergamo distinguishes several different Minervas, etc. In order to make clear these mythological genealogies, he has recourse to Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum*, of which we shall have much to say later.

et Caesarum Romanorum [1598]), show us gods and heroes, in an apparently secure historical framework, among patriarchs, philosophers, and Caesars.

*

THUS THE EXISTENCE of the gods continues to be sanctioned on historical grounds; furthermore, as in the Middle Ages, there is a disposition to regard them as the forerunners of civilization. This tendency is already very evident in Jacopo da Bergamo. Minerva, he says, was the first woman to understand the art of working in wool (f. 15); Chiron was the inventor of medicine (f. 18, r), Hermes Trismegistus the first astronomer (f. 21, r), Mercury the first musician (f. 20, v). Prometheus taught men to make fire and to wear rings (f. 19, r); Atlas taught the Greeks astrology (*ibid.*). Apollo, Aesculapius, etc., are placed in a section entitled "Viri disciplinis excellentes"; other gods, like Faunus, Mars, etc., appear under the heading: "Viri doctrinis excellentes."

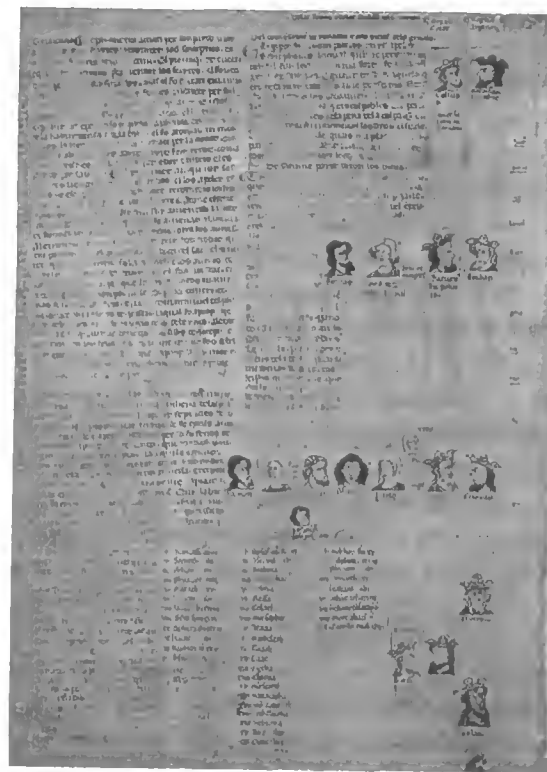
Even more typical, from the same point of view, is the *De inventoribus* of Polydore Virgil.³¹ In the preface, already present in the first (1499) edition, we find first a declaration of euhemeristic belief: "And whatsoever things may have been attributed by us to Saturn, Jove, Neptune, Dionysus, Apollo, Aesculapius, Ceres, Vulcan, and to such others as have the name of gods, we have thus attributed to them as to mortal men, and not as to gods, even though we still call them by that name." After this declaration, which he obviously thinks should protect him from any quibbling on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities, Polydore does not hesitate to salute each god as an innovator: Hermes Trismegistus established time divisions (II, 5); from Bacchus, man learned how to make wine (III, 3); Venus taught the courtesans their art (III, 17); Mercury, according to Diodorus and Cicero, taught the alphabet to the Egyptians (I, 6). Pliny attributes man's knowledge of the heavenly bodies to Jupiter Belus; Diodorus, to Mercury (I, 17).

³¹ Polidoro Virgilio da Urbino, *De rerum inventoribus*. The first edition (Venice, 1499) consisted of only three books, later increased to eight in the Basel edition of 1521. In spite of all his precautions, Polydore's work was put

upon the Index.

On a copy of the *De rer. invent.* with annotations by Rabelais, see Perrat, "Le Polydore Virgile de Rabelais," *Humanisme et Renaissance*, XI (1949), pp. 167-204.

Thus the Renaissance only confirmed the right of the ancient gods—those geniuses responsible for our civilization—to the gratitude of the human



1. Caelus and his descendants

race. It is no exaggeration to say that the Renaissance even restored them to their place in heaven: "Shouldst thou follow in the footsteps of David," wrote Zwingli to Francis I in 1531,³² "thou wilt one day see God Himself; and near to Him thou mayest hope to see Adam, Abel, Enoch, Paul, Hercules, Theseus, Socrates, the Catos, the Scipios. . . ."

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³² *Christianae fidei brevis et clara expositio*.

FINALLY, we have noted during the Middle Ages a strange phenomenon—a whole people claiming a mythological hero as ancestor, choosing him, as it were, for their progenitor and patron. This phenomenon persists into the Renaissance, even taking on new and striking forms.

The legend of the Trojan origin of the Franks was, as is well known, exploited by Jean Le Maire de Belges, in his *Illustrations de Gaule et singularités de Troie*, which attained immense popularity. One reason for this success was that "nearly every nation could find there, as if in an archival setting, its most ancient titles of nobility. Only the Germans and French could boast undisputed descent from Hector himself, but others—Bretons, Flemings, Scandinavians, Normans, Italians, and Spaniards—also found ways of asserting their own relationship with him, to justify either their pride or their ambition."³³ Now Le Maire distributed the names of the various Trojan heroes, like spoils of war, among these claimants: the Bretons were said to be descendants of Brutus, first king of Brittany; the Spaniards of Hesperus, the Italians of Italus, the men of Brabant of Brabo, the Tuscans of Tuscus, and the Burgundians of Hercules the Great of Libya.³⁴

Let us further note that Jean Le Maire greatly strengthens the divine element in the legend of Troy. The gods are given a preponderant role in his historico-mythological romance—something which we do not find in Dictys, Dares, or Benoît de Sainte-Maure.³⁵

Ronsard's *Franciade* was less successful than the *Illustrations*; the failure and neglect which were to be the lot of this enthusiastically anticipated epic are well known. But the *Franciade* reveals a new tendency which is particularly appropriate to the Renaissance: it is inspired not by "ethnic consciousness" but by dynastic pride. Charles IX personally supervised the composition of the poem,³⁶ in his concern to have it establish a direct connection

³³ Thibaut, *Marguerite d'Autriche et Jean Le Maire de Belges*, pp. 171–172.

³⁴ See G. Doutrepoint, *Jean Lemaire de Belges et la Renaissance*, pp. 273–274. Goropius Becanus (Jean Becan van Gorp), in his *Origines Antwerpianae* (1569), invents a still more extravagant ancestry for the Flemings. They are Cimmerians, sons of Japheth; their wis-

dom comes to them from the Thracian Orpheus (Bk. vii).—Etienne Pasquier, in his *Recherches de la France*, and Claude Fauchet, in his *Antiquités gauloises et françaises*, were at last to dispose of the Trojan legend.

³⁵ See Doutrepoint, *op. cit.*, p. 387.

³⁶ See Ronsard's "Avis au lecteur."

Hercules as
progenitor of
Burgundians

between the sixty-three sovereigns of his own line and the most fabulous antiquity.

Princely pretensions of this sort, indeed, are seldom glimpsed before the end of the Middle Ages. In 1390, however, Jacques de Guise wrote a universal chronicle which bore this revealing title: *Annales de l'histoire des illustres princes de Hainaut, depuis le commencement du monde*.³⁷ Later, the dukes of Burgundy were to pride themselves on their descent from a demigod; the Trojan legends were in great favor at their court—and that as early as the fourteenth century.³⁸ Late in the fifteenth, a *Recueil des histoires de Troyes* (1464) was being read there, in which Hercules is given unwonted prominence. The author, Raoul Lefèvre, proposes to deal with his subject in three books, the second of which is to treat of the Labors of Hercules, and to show that he twice destroyed the city of Troy. Furthermore, Hercules appeared in the tapestries decorating the hall where the Banquet of the Pheasant Oath was held (Lille, 1454), and in a pantomime performed at the wedding festivities of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York. Why this special emphasis upon Hercules? It is due to his reputed place as founder of the dynasty. Olivier de la Marche relates in his *Mémoires* that Hercules, journeying long ago into Spain, passed through the land of Burgundy and there met a lady of great beauty and noble lineage, Alise by name. They were wed, and from their union issued the line of Burgundian princes.

Another mythological hero, Jason, was well known at the Burgundian court: Philip the Good put himself under his aegis when, in 1430, he founded the Order of the Golden Fleece. To be sure, a Biblical hero, Gideon, seconded Jason in his functions as patron of the order. But this very partnership, bringing out as it does the parallelism between sacred and profane,

³⁷ *Annales historiae illustrium principum Hanoniae ab initio rerum usque ad annum Christi 1390*; partially translated into French by Jean Wauquelin around 1445, and published by E. Sackur, *MGH, Scriptores*, xxx, pt. 1 (1896). (Cf. cod. 9242 of the Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels; see fig. 6.)

³⁸ The library of Philip the Good contained

seventeen volumes destined to disseminate the legend. See Doutrepoint, "La littérature française à la cour des ducs de Bourgogne," *Société d'Emulation de Bruges, Mélanges*, 1 (1908). It should be recalled that the *Illustrations* of Jean Le Maire were published from 1509 to 1513—that is to say, long after the last duke of Burgundy had disappeared (1477).

serves admirably to illustrate the persistence of the medieval point of view.³⁹

Princely pride found ample satisfaction in these claims of mythological sponsorship and heredity. In addition to the dukes of Burgundy and the kings of France, should we perhaps also cite the example of Pope Alexander VI, who used the Borgia coat of arms as warrant for having the ceiling of his Vatican apartments decorated with frescoes representing the story of Isis, Osiris, and the monster Apis—unexpected antecedents, indeed, for a Christian pontiff?⁴⁰

Other comparable instances might be found in the seventeenth century. In 1600, the Jesuits of Avignon, charged with organizing the ceremonial reception given by the city to Marie de Médicis, bestowed on her royal consort the title of Gallic Hercules ("Hercule Gaulois"), justifying the extravagant flattery on the following grounds: "L'illustre maison de Navarre a prins sa source de l'ancien Hercule, fil d'Osiris, lequel ayant battu et combattu les Lominiens, qui étaient les trois enfants de Geryon, tyran des Espagnes, et ayant affranchi ce peuple de leur servitude, établit en cette monarchie son fils Hispalus, les neveux duquel succédèrent depuis à la couronne du royaume de Navarre."⁴⁰

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ICONOGRAPHY, in turn, attests the continuity of the "euhemeristic" tradition, and gives striking illustration to its varied aspects. We shall limit ourselves to a few examples.

In the first place, for visual demonstration of the insertion of the gods into history, let us glance at a Provençal chronicle (British Museum, Egerton ms. 1500) of the early fourteenth century (after 1313). This chronicle, in

³⁹ See Doutrepoint, *op. cit.*, p. 147.—On Jason and Gideon, see Olivier de la Marche, *Epistre à Philippe le Beau pour tenir et célébrer la noble feste de Toison d'Or*. The Jason legend was spread by Raoul Lefèvre (*Jason*), Michaut Taillevent (*Le songe de la Toison d'Or*), and Guillaume Fillastre (*La Toison d'Or*).

^{40a} See forthcoming volume of lectures by F. Saxl, to be published by the Warburg Institute, London.

⁴⁰ *Labyrinthe royal de l'Hercule Gaulois*

Triomphant . . . représenté à l'entrée triomphante de la Roynie en la cité d'Avignon le 19 nov. de l'an MDC . . . ("The illustrious house of Navarre issued from the ancient Hercules, son of Osiris, who, having fought and overcome the Lominians, the three children of Geryon, tyrant of Spain, and having freed the people of that country from their servitude, established as head of that monarchy his son, Hispalus, whose descendants later succeeded to the crown of the kingdom of Navarre").

the form of a *rotulus*, is illustrated by tables which are both genealogical and synoptic, and which show us the head of each person named. The first two



2. Biblical and pagan heroes

heads naturally represent Adam and Eve (f. 3, r); then follow their descendants, Noah, Shem, etc. (f. 3, v); next appear the profane dynasties. Here we see, arranged in parallel, vertical rows (f. 6, r), the rulers of the various

kingdoms of antiquity. In the Cretan dynasty we find Saturn, beneath Caelus and above Jupiter; on the same horizontal line with Jupiter are his wife Juno, his brothers Plato, Neptune, etc. The gods are included as a matter of course in the historical narrative (fig. 1).



3. Apollo Medicus

ii. iv, 348). These drawings, in fact, present another illustrated world chronicle; they show us, after Adam and Eve, the patriarchs, Noah, Abraham, and their successors, along with "contemporary" pagan figures—Inachus, Cecrops, Codrus, Saturn, Jupiter, etc. What is particularly notable is the parallelism established between all these great figures of the past, historical or legendary, Jew or Gentile—Prophets and Sibyls, judges, warriors, poets, and lawgivers. Especially significant is the prominence given to heroes (Jason,

The most typical example of the tradition of the heroes and sages that places profane and sacred history on the same plane, is afforded by the famous series of drawings attributed to Maso Finiguerra, preserved in the British Museum under the title of *Florentine Picture Chronicle*.⁴¹ Sir Sidney Colvin, who had studied the drawings extensively and dated them between 1455 and 1465, related them to a *Sommario*, or *Breve historia universale*, in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence (Cat. xxv. iv, 565,

⁴¹ *A Florentine Picture Chronicle, Being a Series of Ninety-Nine Drawings Representing Scenes and Personages of Ancient History, Sacred and Profane . . . reproduced from the originals with a critical and descriptive text* (London, 1898). To the same family belongs the fine manuscript (fig. 2) owned by Sir Sidney C. Cockerell.

Theseus) and to sages; the image of Apollo (fig. 4; cf. also fig. 3, an Apollo of the tenth century belonging to the same tradition) is of particular interest in this connection. It represents Apollo the Healer:

. . . dieu sauveur, dieu des savants mystères,
dieu de la vie et dieu des plantes salutaires.⁴²

Standing at a patient's bedside, with his conjuring books and imps, he seems engaged in some terrifying act of exorcism. He looks like an Oriental magician, and in adjacent drawings we do in fact encounter, similarly accoutered, Hostanes conjuring up demons, and Oromasdes resuscitating a dead person. In the same group appear Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, Linus, and Musaeus—all the esoteric wisdom of Persia, Egypt, and Greece.⁴³



4. Apollo as a physician

⁴² " . . . savior God, God of learned mysteries, God of life and of health-giving plants . . . "

⁴³ On the knowledge of Oriental magic and the influence of the Cabala in fifteenth-century Florence, see Colvin, *op. cit.*, Introduction, paragraphs vi-vii.—Cf. F. Cumont and J. Bidez, *Les Mages hellénisés* (Paris, 1939).

On the representation of the sages of antiquity in Renaissance art, see E. Müntz, *Histoire de l'art pendant la Renaissance*, II, p. 125.

Mention should also be made, among the illustrators of this tradition, of Giusto da Padova, whose frescoes in the church of the Eremitani, Padua, have disappeared, but who

has left us his drawings for them, executed in the last years of the fourteenth century. See A. Venturi, "Il libro di Giusto per la Cappella degli Eremitani in Padova," in *Le Gallerie nazionali italiane*, IV (1899), pp. 345-376; and, by the same author, "Il libro di disegni di Giusto" (reproduced in its entirety), *ibid.*, V (1902), pp. 391 ff. Cf. also J. von Schlosser, "Giusto's Fresken in Padua . . .," *Jahrb. d. kunsth. Samml. d. Allerh. Kaiserh.*, XVII (1896), pp. 11-100. The miniatures of Leonardo da Besozzo (1435-1442) derive from Giusto's drawings.

See also *La canzone delle virtù e delle scienze di Bartolomeo di Bartoli* (text and illustrations), published by L. Dorez (1904).



5. Hercules slaying Cacus

Of the personages of Fable viewed expressly as inventors of arts and skills we possess some celebrated images in the lowest zone of bas-reliefs on the Campanile in Florence. Not far from the first horseman and the first navigator, we recognize Daedalus, first conqueror of the air; near the mathemati-

⁴⁴ The motifs treated are the Creation of Adam, the Creation of Eve, their Fall and Punishment; the Sacrifice of Abraham; the Combats of Hercules with Antaeus, with the Cretan Bull, the Nemean Lion, and the Lernaean Hydra (fig. 11).

⁴⁵ Chosen by reason of their connection with Christianity. See J. von Schlosser, "Die ältesten Medaillen und die Antike," *Jahrb. d. kunsth. Samml. d. Allerh. Kaiserh.*, xviii (1897), pp. 60-108.

⁴⁶ See *supra*, p. 21. Several of the Certosa reliefs, furthermore, are inspired by forged medals: see von Schlosser, *op. cit.*, and our article, "Youth, Innocence, and Death. Some Notes on a Medallion on the Certosa of Pavia," *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, i (1937-38), pp. 298-303.

Cf. also forthcoming volume by C. Mitchell on the role of the classical coins in the Italian Renaissance, to be published by the Warburg Institute, London.

The parallelism between sacred and profane history is further set forth in one of the most exquisite works of the Renaissance, the façade of the Colleoni Chapel in Bergamo, where alternating bas-reliefs represent events from the Old Testament and from mythology, the punishment of Adam and the Labors of Hercules.⁴⁴ At approximately the same date, Lombard sculptors ornamented the zone at the base of the façade of the Certosa of Pavia with medallions which show Prophets side by side with emperors⁴⁵ and gods—a strange series of apocryphal portraits in which the infant Hercules strangles serpents and Judas Maccabeus wears a Mercury cap, and which recalls the numismatic fantasies of the "prosopographies."⁴⁶



6. Diana and her worshippers

cians Euclid and Pythagoras appears Orpheus, father of poetry; still another of civilization's early heroes and benefactors is Hercules, portrayed here as victor over the monster Cacus (fig. 5). Here we have the euhemeristic tradition at its purest and noblest; the best commentary on these sculptures is the passage in which Cicero exalts the *animus divinus* of the precursors of civilization: "Omnes magni: etiam superiores, qui vestitum, qui tecta, qui cultum vitae, qui praesidia contra feras invenerunt; a quibus mansuefacti et exculi, a necessariis artificibus ad elegantiora defluximus. . . ."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ *Tusc.*, i, 25. ("All these were great men; earlier still the men who discovered the fruits of the earth, raiment, dwellings, an ordered way of life, protection against wild creatures—men under whose civilizing influence we have gradually passed on from the indispen-

sable handicrafts to the finer arts."—LCL.)

Here, again, the illustrated chronicles would furnish many supplementary examples. Among the French manuscripts of the Bibliothèque Nationale we cite cod. 301, *Les livres des histoires du commencement du monde*,

We have further seen that the Legend of Troy, as enlarged upon by pseudo historians, had played a part in the "laicizing" of certain mythological heroes; visual imagery makes this doubly clear. In the Finiguerra drawings Jason and Theseus are shown, and near them Paris and Troilus. Even earlier, however, in the frescoes representing the Trojan war, painted about 1380 in the Steri at Palermo,⁴⁸ the ship Argo was to be seen, with Jason, Hercules, Castor, and Pollux. The painter of these scenes, as Ezio Levi has shown, was merely following the text of Guido delle Colonne (*Historia destructionis Trojae* [1273-1287]), which, in turn, is an adaptation of the *Roman de Troie* of Benoît de Sainte-Maure. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a swarm of illustrated manuscripts of this romance or its derivatives present us with images of the demigods.⁴⁹

Finally, the mythological ancestry on which the Renaissance princes so prided themselves was of course celebrated in works of art.⁵⁰ We need mention here only the tapestries of the cathedral of Beauvais, where we see, among other figures, Francus greeting the daughter of the king of the Gauls whom he is to marry, and Jupiter, accompanied by Hercules, bringing the alphabet of civilization to Gaul. These tapestries have their source, as Emile Mâle has proved,⁵¹ in the *Illustrations* of Jean Le Maire. Le Maire sets himself up as the final arbiter of Trojan iconography: "L'histoire véritable de la maison troyenne," he writes, "ne sera plus désormais peinte, figurée, ne patrociniée, pour l'aornement des salles et chambres royales, sinon après la nar-

and cod. 6362, *Histoire universelle* (figs. 7, 8).

In the 1486 and subsequent Venetian editions of the *Supplementum* of Jacopo da Bergamo, a somewhat crude engraving shows a group of gods whom the text cites as "inventors"; the woodcuts of Wohlgemut and Pleydenwurf (1493) in the *Great Chronicle of Nuremberg* are of interest in the same connection.

⁴⁸ See E. Levi and E. Gabrici, *Lo Steri di Palermo e le sue pitture* (1932); E. Levi, *L'Epopée médiévale nelle pitture dello Steri di Palermo* (1933).

⁴⁹ Examples are: Bibliothèque Nationale, cods. fr. 782 and 22.552 (fig. 9); Venice, Marciana, cod. fr. 17; Rome, Vatican, cod. Reg. 1505; Milan, Ambrosiana, cod. H 86 sup.; Geneva, Bibl. Munic., cods. fr. 64 and 72; Leningrad,

cod. F.v.XIV n. 3 (fr. 2), etc.

⁵⁰ In 1393, Philip the Bold had acquired from a Parisian tapisserie two pieces depicting Jason's winning of the Golden Fleece (J. Guiffrey, *Histoire générale de la tapisserie*, Vol. 1: *Les tapisseries françaises*, p. 19. These tapestries may have suggested to the Duke the idea of placing himself under the aegis of the hero of Colchis (cf. Dontrepoint, *op. cit.*, p. 147). Philip the Good, in 1449, ordered in Tournai eight immense tapestries illustrating the history of the Golden Fleece (Soit, *Tapisseries de Tournai*, pp. 24, 233-235, 374, f.).

See H. Gübel, *Wandteppiche* (1928), II: *Die romanischen Länder*, vol. 1, pp. 16, 107, 411, 414, and 552, n. 101.

⁵¹ *L'Art religieux de la fin du moyen âge*, pp. 342-346.

ration présente, antique et véritable."⁵² In this domain, the artist will from now on be little more than an instrument made use of by some erudite courtier for flattering the pride of his masters.



7. Rape of Deianira



8. Rape of Proserpina

Later, under Henri II, the French court was to go to even further lengths, acting out literally and in all seriousness the comedy of Olympus.⁵³ Art and poetry joined forces to attest the divinity of the sovereign, his consort, his favorite, and their entourage.

In the château of Tanlay, the sixteenth-century residence of the Coligny-Châtillon family, a fresco⁵⁴ by a pupil of Primaticcio groups a number of contemporary persons in the guise of gods and goddesses (fig. 10). There is no doubt as to the interpretation, which has been furnished us by Ronsard

⁵² Bk. I, prol. 3-4; cf. II, p. 144. ("The veritable history of the House of Troy shall henceforth be neither painted, imaged, or advocated for the adornment of royal halls and chambers save in accordance with the present narrative, which is from antiquity and truthful.")

⁵³ See E. Bourciez, *Les Moeurs polies et la*

littérature de Cour sous Henri II (1886), II, chap. II: "L'Olympe nouveau."

⁵⁴ See C. Oulmont, "La fresque de la tour de la Ligue au Château de Tanlay," *Revue de l'art*, II (1933), pp. 183-184; and F. E. Schneegans, "A propos d'une fresque mythologique du xvième siècle," *Humanisme et Renaissance*, II (1935), pp. 441-444.

himself in a *hymne* celebrating the virtues of the Coligny house.⁵⁵ The artist must have taken his inspiration from this poem. Jupiter is the king, Henri II;



9. *Jupiter vanquishing Saturn*

Mars, the Connétable de Montmorency; Themis, the Duchess of Ferrara. As for Mercury,

C'est ce grand demi-dieu Cardinal de Lorraine . . .

In the same year that Ronsard composed these verses, Léonard Limousin

⁵⁵ *Hymnes*, I, iv (1555). Cf. *Le Temple de Neptune*, etc.; and *Hymnes*, II, II, where Odet de Châtillon appears as Hercules.

where Anne reigns as Mars, Gaspard as

reproduced Raphael's *Feast of the Gods* on an enameled plate.⁵⁶ Here, again, the place of Jupiter was taken by the king, while Catherine de Médicis appeared as Juno, and Diane de Poitiers as Diana.⁵⁷

Fetes, ballets, dramatic "eclogues," and the co-operation of all the arts continued to support this royal apotheosis, which was to achieve dazzling consummation in the next century at Versailles.



10. *The Royal Olympus: Henri II and his court*

Thus, at the end of this evolution which has brought us down to the Renaissance, we find the euhemeristic spirit as much alive as ever, still taking the

⁵⁶ See Bourciez, *loc. cit.*, pp. 176-177. The plate is described and reproduced in the *Rev. archéol.* (1855), pp. 311 ff. The persons represented, instead of being completely costumed à l'antique, are shown wearing plumed toques.

⁵⁷ The reader will recall the celebrated Diana

at Anet, now in the Louvre; in the same château was formerly a marble medallion (now in the Musée de Cluny) representing Catherine de Médicis as Juno. See also the curious examples assembled by E. Wind, "Studies in Allegorical Portraiture," *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, I (1937-38), pp. 138 ff.

two main forms which we detected at the outset. At times we have to do with a tribute of gratitude and veneration offered to great men; at others, with extravagant adulation of worldly power. In both cases, the recipients are raised to the rank of gods.



11. Hercules and the Lernaean Hydra

II

The Physical Tradition

THE HEAVENLY bodies are gods. "We must assign the same divinity to the stars."¹ This opinion, at the time of its formulation by Cicero, was on the way to becoming general. For a Roman or Alexandrian of that age, the stars were not as they are for us, "bodies infinitely remote in space, which move according to the inflexible laws of mechanics, and whose composition is chemically determinable." They were "divinities."²

Every mind which perceives a governing intelligence behind the movement of the spheres instinctively places this divine power in heaven.³ From this it is but a step to considering the sun, moon, and stars as in themselves divine. Among other determining factors, it was the mythological names given to the stars—in obedience to the same instinct—which above all else encouraged the Greeks, and after them the Romans, to take this step. *Nomen, numen*—the name alone was enough to lend divine personality to each luminous body moving in the heavens, but complete identification was achieved when that name was Hercules or Mars, that is, the name of a god whose appearance and history were already well known. And the mythological imagination of the Greeks, which had created gods on earth, could readily picture them in the skies as well.

However, this identification of the gods with astral bodies, which had been fully accomplished by the end of the pagan era, was the end product of

¹ "Tribuenda est sideribus . . . divinitas" (*De le paganisme romain*, in *Les Religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*, p. 160. *natur. deor.*, II, 15).

² F. Cumont, "L'astrologie et la magie dans ³ As in Plato, *Laws*, x, 899 b, and *Timaeus*, 36 d ff.